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Information/Action

Educator Preparation Committee

Update on the Commission's Work Related to the Education Specialist Preliminary Credential and Associated Work Group

Executive Summary: This agenda item provides an update on efforts of a Commission Work Group to improve the preparation of prospective special education teachers.

Policy Question: Does the work as described in this item align with the Commission's expectations? Does the Commission wish to expand the Early Childhood Special Education Credential (ECSE) from Birth to Pre-K to Birth to K?

Recommended Action: Staff seeks feedback on the work to date and the direction that the group is taking. Staff recommends approving the expansion of the ECSE credential to Birth to K.

Presenters: William Hatrick and Sarah Solari Colombini, Consultants, Professional Services Division

Strategic Plan Goal

II. Program Quality and Accountability

- a) Develop and maintain rigorous, meaningful, and relevant standards that drive program quality and effectiveness for the preparation of the education workforce and are responsive to the needs of California's diverse student population.

December 2016

Update on the Commission's Work Related to the Education Specialist Preliminary Credential and Associated Work Group

Introduction

This agenda item presents information about the continuing work to improve educator preparation for special education teachers and asks the Commission to provide feedback on the work to date.

Background

The Commission on Teacher Credentialing has participated in several initiatives within the past two years to improve the preparation of educators serving students with disabilities. Recent policy decisions include the adoption of revised [Teaching Performance Expectations](#) (TPEs) that will significantly strengthen the preparation for general education teachers working with students with disabilities. The Commission has not adopted these TPEs for Education Specialists; however, the Commission did signal its intent to have these performance expectations serve as a common core of preparation for candidates, also called the common trunk in general and special education preparation, and to potentially require prospective special education teachers to pass a Teaching Performance Assessment (TPA) in the future. Although the TPEs define the foundational knowledge, skills and abilities a teacher should have, it is necessary to identify what additional knowledge, skills and abilities beyond the TPEs are needed for a candidate to earn an Education Specialist teaching credential in California.

Status of Current Work

The Education Specialist Preliminary Credential Work Group is charged with the following tasks:

1. To identify the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed by teachers seeking an initial education specialist credential.
2. To develop some possible credential structures for the initial level Education Specialist Credential(s).
3. To recommend what the subject matter requirement should be for Education Specialist candidates given that the credential authorizes teaching for a wide range of grades and all content areas.

A complete list of work group participants and their affiliations is available in Appendix A.

The work group began meeting in October and has had two meetings thus far. Two additional meetings are planned for January and February 2017.

A summary of the first work group meeting was shared at the October 2016 Commission meeting ([Agenda Item 2G](#)).

Summary of Second Work Group

The second work group meeting was held on November 3-4, 2016 at the Commission office. Twenty-nine of thirty participants were present and work began with a brief summary of the first meeting's activities and discussion. The work group was given an overview of the October Commission meeting agenda item and feedback received from Commissioners and members of the public. To help facilitate an understanding of the complexities of the existing Education Specialist credential structure in terms of Education Code and the California Code of Regulations, staff from the Certification Unit met with the group to answer questions regarding the impact of potential changes to the current credential structure.

At the request of several work group members, staff provided more information on the Language and Academic Development (LAD) credential. In contrast to the other six preliminary Education Specialist credentials, the LAD credential is cross-categorical in that it allows teachers to serve students with disabilities across all federal disability areas who have specific needs in academic communication and language. A chart showing other states' credential structures and added authorizations was also provided to the group for reference (see Appendix B).

At this second meeting, the group was focused on two major tasks: 1) developing one or more credential structures to recommend to the Commission and 2) considering the appropriate subject matter competence needed for Special Education teachers. The work group agreed on the following ideas related to the future credential structure for special education teachers:

- The adopted Teaching Performance Expectations (TPEs) are foundational and define what both prospective general education and special education teachers must know and be able to do to support students' academic success.
- There should be a set of core expectations for all special education teachers that go beyond the general education TPEs and are specific to the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to successfully serve students with disabilities. These would be developed as the Special Education TPEs and the work group will focus on this task at the January 2017 meeting.

The group supports maintaining specific credentials for Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE), Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH), and Visual Impairment (VI). Further discussion is needed to determine whether these remain initial credentials or advanced areas of specialization. The DHH and VI credentials should continue to authorize service for students ages birth – 22. Members emphasized that the discussion and outcomes need to stay focused on what is best for students with disabilities and requested that staff provide enough time for rich discussion and analysis on this topic.

Early Childhood Special Education

As stated above, the work group expressed support for maintaining the Early Childhood Special Education credential but had significant conversation about which students ECSE teachers should be authorized to teach. Currently this credential authorizes the individual to provide services to children ages birth to pre-kindergarten only. Members of the work group noted that

ECSE teachers are currently authorized to teach 4 year olds with disabilities and have been doing so successfully for many years, however they are not currently authorized to teach transitional kindergarten. Given the growth in TK classrooms in recent years, the question was raised about whether the authorization should allow ECSE teachers to teach TK. The work group reached consensus on this issue and recommends expanding ECSE to include TK and kindergarten. The proposed expansion would allow teachers to work with students in transitional kindergarten (TK) and kindergarten classes.

In considering a possible expansion of ECSE to TK and kindergarten, the work group also discussed the differences in examination requirements for ECSE teachers and those who teach TK and kindergarten. Currently prospective ECSE teachers are required to satisfy basic skills but are not required to demonstrate subject matter competence or pass the Reading Instruction Competency Assessment (RICA). No consensus regarding what would constitute appropriate subject matter competence for the ECSE credential was reached however, there was discussion. In addition to satisfying basic skills, the group discussed the possibility of requiring ECSE candidates to pass the Reading Instruction Competency Assessment (RICA). The rationale discussed at the meeting focused on the idea that the basic skills examination assesses reading, writing, and mathematics through eighth grade and the ECSE candidates would only be authorized to teach up to Kindergarten. The group agreed that the RICA examination would be a reasonable requirement because supporting literacy is a key component of what a teacher working with children from birth through kindergarten needs. At this time, Education Code section §44283.2(b) specifically exempts individuals seeking an ECSE credential from being required to take and pass the RICA examination and, therefore, legislative change would be necessary to change this requirement.

Student Needs Rather than Federal Disability Categories/Grade Levels Authorized

The current credential structure is aligned to the federal disability categories. To better meet the needs of K-12 students with disabilities, the work group recommends that the education specialist credential authorizations focus on student needs and the levels of service needed rather than federal disability categories. Participants also agreed that the credential structure should reflect grade level bands for high incidence areas.

General Education Authorization

Lastly, the group felt that if a prospective special education teacher has completed preparation in the common trunk and passes a required performance assessment, that teacher should receive the appropriate authorization to work with general education students based on their preparation. The group has still not come to consensus regarding exactly how much of the general education preparation a prospective special education teacher should complete. If the prospective special education teacher completes all of the general education preparation, then of course the teacher should have a full general education authorization. But if on the other hand, the prospective special education teacher completes a subset of the general education preparation, the special education teacher would likely have a more limited general education authorization.

Considerations Regarding Credential Structure

The group did not reach consensus on any one model to recommend to the Commission. However the group took three distinct approaches to conceptualizing the preliminary Education Specialist credential structure. All of the approaches shared the TPEs as the base of knowledge with an additional common set of special education TPEs to be identified at future meetings of the work group as the core of an Education Specialist preparation program.

- The first concept is an initial special education credential that would authorize service to elementary and secondary students with disabilities (K – 22). Teachers could then specialize in ECSE, DHH, VI, case management, or working with students with the most intensive needs during their program.
- The second approach is similar, but the base credential would be segmented by grade bands such as Early Childhood (birth – K), grades K – 8, and grade 6 – age 22. Then teachers could go on to specialize in the additional areas mentioned above.
- The third approach has five initial credentials all of which share the general education and special education TPEs as common preparation. The five initial credential areas would include elementary (grades K – 8), secondary (grade 6 – age 22), ECSE, DHH, and VI. All candidates would have coursework that would focus on teaching students with intensive learning needs and disabilities incorporated into their programs.

Although the work group has begun to develop some possibilities, they are still intent on developing recommendations that would reflect a needs-based credential system, therefore they have requested more time for discussion at their remaining meetings.

Staff seeks Commission feedback on the issues in front of the workgroup and invites direction regarding any questions, issues or recommendations to take back to the group to inform their work.

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends 1) that the Commission expand the authorization for the Early Childhood Special Education Credential to include birth to kindergarten, and 2) that the Commission work with the legislature to require all ECSE candidates to pass the RICA examination.

Next Steps

If the Commission approves the expansion of the authorization of the ESCE credential to Kindergarten the Commission could begin the regulatory process. In addition, if the Commission determines that all ECSE candidates should be subject to the RICA examination, the Commission would need to seek to change current Education Code section §44283.2(b) before this requirement could be put into place. If the Commission determines that the expansion of the credential should not take place unless or until the RICA examination is required for ECSE, then the legislative change should be sought before moving ahead with regulatory change.

Staff will continue to update the Commission on outcomes from the work group activities with respect to the additional knowledge, skills and abilities necessary to become a special education teacher and identified changes recommended to the Education Specialist credential structure.

Appendix A

Preliminary Special Education Work Group

Name	Affiliation	Current Position
Representatives to the Work Group		
Mary Briggs	California School Boards Association Liaison	Education Policy Analyst
Mary Gomes	Association of California School Administrators Liaison	Educational Services Executive
Cheryl Mohr	California County Superintendents Educational Services Association Liaison, Madera County Office of Education	Executive Director, Student Programs and Services
Emily Solari	University of California Liaison, UC Davis	Associate Professor of Education
Kristin Stout	California State University Liaison, CSU Long Beach	Education Specialist Credential Program Coordinator
Ingrid Gunnell	California Federation of Teachers Liaison, Los Angeles Unified School District	UTLA/LAUSD Salary Point Advisor
Stephanie Stotelmeyer	California Teachers Association Liaison, Santa Ana Unified School District	Education Specialist, Resource
Diana Taylor	Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities Liaison, Mt. St. Mary's University	Education Specialist Program Director
Aaron Christensen	California Department of Education Liaison	Education Programs Consultant
Work Group Members		
Suzanne Borgese	Placentia Yorba Linda Unified School District	Education Specialist, Mild/Moderate
Jessica Burrone	Yuba County Office of Education	Special Education Principal, Moderate/Severe
Cathy Creasia	University of Southern California	Credential Analyst and Project Specialist for Accreditation and Evaluation
Anne Delfosse	West Orange County Consortium for Special Education	Executive Director
John Erratt	Orange Unified School District	Special Education Program Coordinator
Elizabeth Freer	Etiwanda School District	Director of Special Education
Jean Gonsier-Gerdin	California State University, Sacramento	Professor
Victoria Graf	Loyola Marymount University	Professor of Education
Elizabeth Jara	San Joaquin County Office of Education	Education Specialist, Emotional Disturbance
Talya Kemper	California State University, Chico	Assistant Professor, Special Education
Meghan Magee	Mother Lode Union School District	School Psychologist
Elise Morgan	San Diego Unified School District	Education Specialist, Mild/Moderate
Susan Porter	National University	Associate Professor/Chair, Special Education
Diana Sanchez	Los Angeles Unified School District	Teacher of the Deaf
Zachary Smith	Sanger Unified School District	Project Manager, Universal Design for Learning and Special Education
Michael Solis	University of California, Riverside	Assistant Professor, Special Education
Sally Spencer	California State University, Northridge	Professor, Special Education
Deanna Torrington	Rocklin Unified School District	Education Specialist, Resource
Julie Tucker	South San Francisco Unified School District	Induction Special Education Support Provider
Mary Yung	San Mateo County Office of Education	Coordinator, Special Education Teacher Induction
Andrea Zetlin	California State University, Los Angeles	Professor, Special Education

Appendix B

Special Education Teaching Credential Structures in Other States

State	Initial Teaching Credential		Additional Authorizations*
	Developmental or Broad Grade Levels	Low Incidence Areas	
Colorado	Special Education Generalist (ages 5-21) Special Education Specialist (ages 5-21)* Early Childhood Special Education (Birth-age 8) Early Childhood Special Education Specialist (Birth-age 8)	Deaf and Hard of Hearing (Birth-age 21) Visually Impaired (Birth-age 21)	N/A
Connecticut	Integrated Early Childhood/Special Education (Birth-K) Integrated Early Childhood/Special Education (Nursery-K-Elementary 1-3) Comprehensive Special Education (K-12)	Blind (PK-12) Partially Sighted (PK-12) Hearing Impaired (PK-12)	N/A
Florida	Exceptional Student Education (K-12)	Hearing Impaired (K-12) Visually Impaired (K-12)	Autism Spectrum Disorders Orientation and Mobility Prekindergarten Disabilities Severe or Profound Disabilities
Illinois	Special Education Learning Behavior Specialist (PK-age 21)	Blind or Visually Impaired (PK-age 21) Deaf and Hard of Hearing (PK-age 21)	Curriculum Adaptation Multiple Disabilities Behavior Intervention Deaf-Blind Bilingual Special Education Technology Transition
Kansas	High-Incidence Special Education: Early childhood (Birth-K, Birth-grade 3, or PK-grade 3) Early childhood through late childhood (K-grade 6) Late childhood through early adolescence (grades 5-8) Early childhood through late adolescence and adulthood (grades PK-12) Early adolescence through late adolescence and adulthood (grades 6-12)	Deaf and Hard of Hearing Visually Impaired Low-Incidence Special Education	N/A
Massachusetts	Early Childhood: Students with and without Disabilities (grades PK-2) Moderate Disabilities (grades PK-8) Moderate Disabilities (grades 5-12)	Severe Disabilities (all grades) Deaf and Hard of Hearing (all grades) Visually Impaired (all grades)	N/A
New York	Students with Disabilities (Birth-grade 2)	Blind and Visually Impaired (all	N/A

Appendix B

Special Education Teaching Credential Structures in Other States

State	Initial Teaching Credential		Additional Authorizations*
	Developmental or Broad Grade Levels	Low Incidence Areas	
	Students with Disabilities (grades 1-6) Students with Disabilities (grades 7-12)	grades) Deaf and Hard of Hearing (all grades)	
Pennsylvania	Special Education (grades PK-8) Special Education (grades 7-12)	Hearing Impaired (PK-12) Visually Impaired (PK-12)	Autism Spectrum Disorders
Rhode Island	Early Childhood Special Education (Birth-grade 2) Elementary Special Education-Mild/Moderate (grades 1-6)* Middle Grades Special Education-Mild/Moderate (grades 5-8)* Secondary Grades Special Education-Mild/Moderate (grades 7-12)*	Blind/Visually Impaired (PK-12) Deaf and Hard of Hearing (PK-12) Severe Intellectual Disability (PK-12)	N/A
Texas	Special Education (Early Childhood-12)	Deaf and Hard of Hearing (EC-12) Visually Impaired (EC-12)	N/A
Washington	Early Childhood Special Education Special Education	Deaf Education* Visually Impaired Education*	N/A
California	Mild to Moderate Disabilities/MM (K-age 22) Moderate to Severe Disabilities/MS (K-age 22) Early Childhood Special Education/ECSE (Birth-PK) Language and Academic Development/LAD (Preschool-age 22)	Deaf and Hard of Hearing (Birth-age 22) Visual Impairments (Birth-age 22) Physical and Health Impairments (Birth-age 22)	Autism Spectrum Disorders Deaf-Blind Emotional Disturbance Orthopedic Impairment Other Health Impairment Traumatic Brain Injury Early Childhood Special Education Resource Specialist Adapted Physical Education

*Denotes a prerequisite credential is required to obtain a license in this area.